

Recording Shadows

Karen Brummund's time lapse public installations, and the continually evolving art of capturing the elements

BY WYLIE
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Since moving to the area in 2006, conceptual artist Karen Brummund has been creating large-scale public art installations at various sites around the county. With a video work currently on view in 'The Object and Beyond,' the 2008 Everson Biennial in Syracuse, she is also one of a dozen local artists selected to participate in the N.Y. State Foundation for the Arts 'Arts Mark' program. And with her forthcoming exhibition in Athens, Greece, *unconfined*, Brummund has been having an extremely busy summer. I managed to catch up with her to chat about art, being a regional artist, and what's currently occupying her time in the studio.

For those who haven't seen one, Brummund's recent installation work involves the creation of a digital drawing of a building, attaching the drawing to the building, and watching it fall down. She created a piece last July at a residential house in Freeville, and more recently, on a barn located on Storm Road in Lansing, where she invited the public to come out and draw as part of the piece.

Ithaca Times: Could you elaborate on your particular form of creative practice?

Karen Brummund: I am making what's called time-based drawings; not only is it a picture of a barn, it is changing all the time, as the wind and rain affects it, as the pictures fall off the building to reveal new lines, new textures, new shapes. The drawing is always changing. But then there is also the video component which explores these changes over time, giving it a whole new meaning. I'm still not sure entirely which is the time-based drawing, or which is the finished work. The installation is the end of one thing and the beginning of another (the studio practice), so in a sense the installation then creates all of this new work.

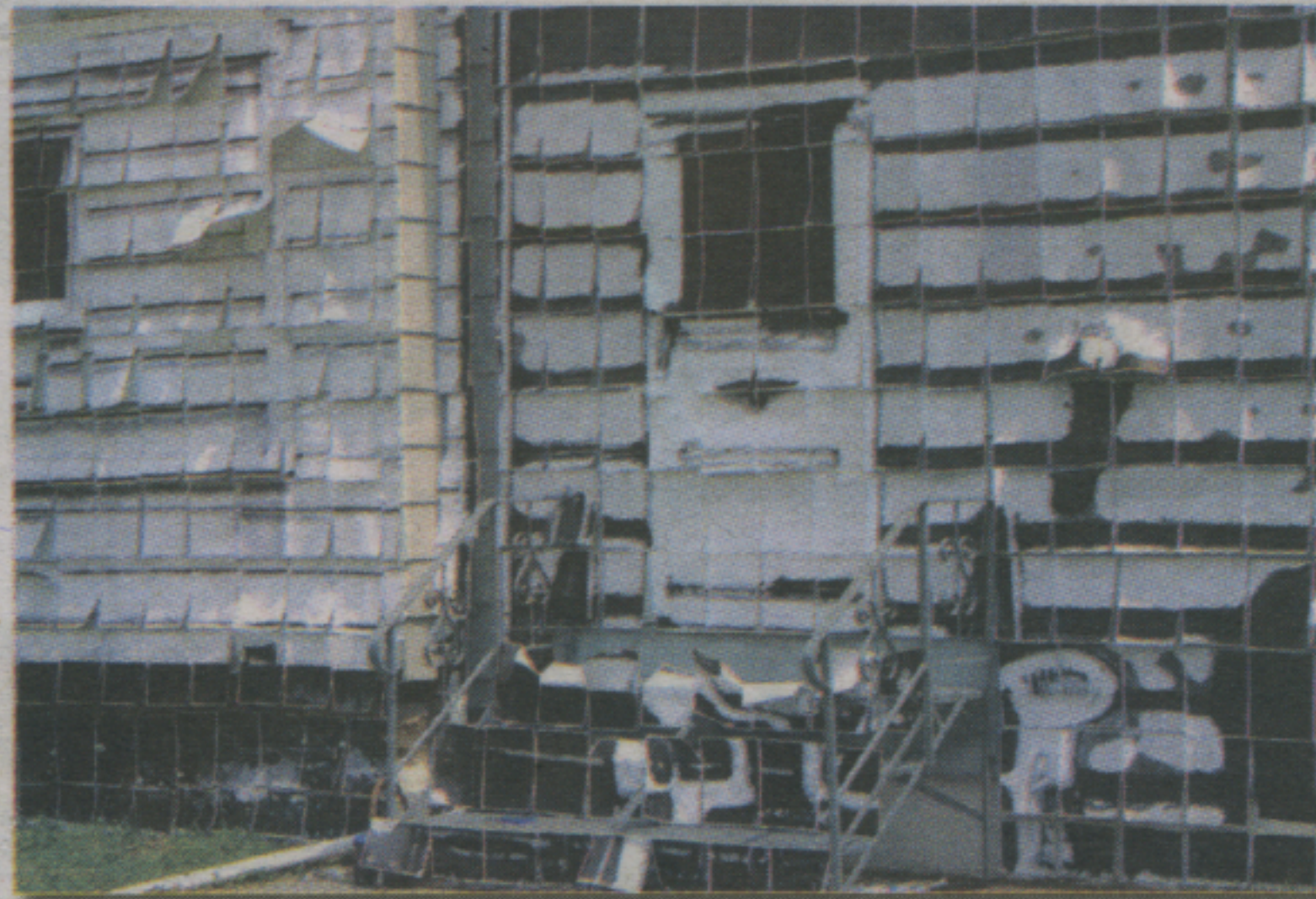
IT: How did you become interested in this type of artistic practice?

Brummund: I'm interested in drawing, and I'm interested in technology. I use these tools to explore new ideas and questions about life and myself. When I started my MFA in London, I was interested in exploring not just the place that art had outside of the gallery, but outside of my studio. I started with a photograph: I split it in half and printed it on two large canvases and then walked it through London. That series, later titled *The Invisible Cage*,

rooted my process in public or community space. Later in the year, I started the current project with drawings of the buildings on the buildings and then watching them fall off.

IT: You moved to Ithaca in 2006 with your husband, a Ph.D. candidate at Cornell. What affect did this change in location have over your practice?

Brummund: When I moved here, I did the Freeville house project because I wanted to focus on the methods and materials in this series on architecture, as I still had some questions left from the last installation I made in London which I wanted to solve. Because it was rural residential, I was able to camp out by it, and that made me much more aware of how the light and the weather was changing it.



IT: Sort of like how the Impressionists must have felt.

Brummund: Yes. I'm intrigued by the way the light is depicted in the photographs and video of the installation. The way that I capture the natural light over time in tandem with the still drawing abstracts the real experience. It is like painting the light on a building at noon and dusk at the same time, or on the same canvas. In each moment it's fragmented and re-interpreted. The Impressionists were interested in observing the light and marking it down. This process has a strong influence on the photographs of the installation and in how you see both the drawing and the object — but they tend to oppose each other, the colors and shadows intermingling.

IT: Your work seems to be particularly tied to process, as opposed to an end product.

Brummund: I like to do projects that relate to public space, which is something that is shared, and how we are re-imagining the space. For the Storm Road installation, I wanted to invite the public to come out and draw it as a process of experiencing it, but also to make something that I can take back to the studio and work with. The drawings made by the public are great — they're inspiring in terms of how I

From top: Karen Brummund. (Photo by Rachel Philipson) Middle: *Surface of 9 Groton Avenue*, digital photograph, by Karen Brummund. Bottom: *Storm Road Installation (3)*, 459" x 264", by Karen Brummund. (Photo provided)

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think about the materials and perception.

Also, a new picture is formed as the paper and barn change and appear and reappear. I am not only interested in how I see it, but also talking with others about how they see it. The drawings done by community members help me understand that dialogue.

IT: When we met last summer at the Freeville project, I recall you saying that, having recently relocated, you were interested in exploring how your type of work might fit into the local community.

Brummund: When I lived in London, the galleries and artists were working in so many different mediums and subjects. Artists were creating a variety of works around sites and communities. The community and landscape of Ithaca is a new experience and I really feel the community has been so supportive. A great number of people came out to Lansing and drew, even if they didn't feel like they were 'professional drawers.' They were willing to step out of their comfort zone and mark something down.

I'm definitely looking forward to seeing more artists' projects in Ithaca. I hope more local galleries, arts organizations, and supporters will bring artists to make temporary and experimental artworks in our region.

IT: Have you seen any other interesting projects since you've been here?

Brummund: I think the Everson Biennale is a great step forward. This year they've really expanded the size of it to include installation art and video works. It is exciting to see that regional artists have a space in their own communities to show their work.

IT: Upstate NY is, after all, the home of video art.

Brummund: Right — we have a history in this region of artists experimenting with new technologies, so it is fitting. Not only do we have the video art legacy and of course Earth art...that there were curators and artists willing to come out here and explore this new medium that wasn't as tried and true as oils. It was just earth, and see whether they could find a new way to understand art, their work, and our public life.

IT: You don't feel as though being

classified as a 'regional artist' is an inhibitor to your professional career as an artist?

Brummund: I think every artist has a region they are associated with. Even if you are practicing in NYC, that says a lot about your practice and potentially the kind of work that you are making and what's influencing you. On the other hand, site-specific projects can be influenced by the region they are created in.

Although I live in Ithaca, I create projects for many different communities. I've found that because I am based in upstate New York, I have to address ways of reaching out and staying connected with the international art world. Communities like Ithaca don't usually have a similar art dialogue going in and coming out of the art scene like the economic channels that exist in NYC or London. That's one reason why big city centers are so influential — there is a trade, and for us it's not as convenient to exchange with international artists, curators, collectors, or writers. Ultimately, a vibrant and competitive scene makes for high quality work and accountability. Working from a regional center, I find I have to be more intentional about peer review, communicating my ideas, and making trips to see new artwork. The NYFA program really helped me learn to reach out.

IT: Could you describe your experience participating in NYFA Arts Mark?

Brummund: The N.Y. Foundation for the Arts opened a program to N.Y. State artists in a six-month professional development program which focused on professional practice in art, such as communication, project management, and funding. The program culminated in a trip to NYC where we gave artist talks at Smack Mellon and met up with curators, gallery owners and arts administrators, connecting more of what we learned to the 'region' of NYC.

IT: What are you currently working on?

Brummund: Right now I'm making drawings and a video based on the Storm Road Project. I've just begun the process of looking at the materials from the installation. We'll see what new ideas I'll discover through the process.

IT: What's next?

Brummund: I still have a few unresolved questions from the series of time-base drawings of architecture, so I'm planning to do a couple more projects of varying scale over the next year. I don't want to be covering buildings with paper for the rest of my life, so I'm looking for funding and opportunities to work through this series and then experiment with something new.

For more info, visit www.karenbrummund.com. ■